DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 044 337 SO 000 332

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TITLE Social Studies Methods and the Curriculum Projects: A Potentially Disfunctional Misalignment.
INSTITUTION National Council for the Social Studies, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE Nov 70
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention, National Council of Social Studies, New York, New York, November, 1970

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.75
DESCRIPTORS Course Content, *Curriculum Development, Instructional Improvement, *Methods Courses, *Preservice Education, *Social Studies, Textbook Content, *Textbook Selection

ABSTRACT

Most social studies methods course textbooks concentrate on planning, assuming the teacher will operate as his own curriculum developer and packager. Curriculum development projects prepackage materials and often include specific instructions on how to use them. Only a few textbooks and projects incorporate selecting/adapting skill development the teacher can apply to choosing or adapting project materials. If this misalignment continues both methods courses and projects will be disfunctional in their common concern, improving the teaching of the social studies in the schools. (VW)

ED044337

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Symposium: The Social Studies Projects and Teachers of Teachers: Critical Issues

(CUFG Meeting, NCSS, New York, November, 1970)

"Social Studies Methods and the Curriculum Projects: A Potentially Disfunctional Misalignment"

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SOCIAL STUDIES METHODS AND THE CURRICULUM PROJECTS: A POTENTIALLY DISFUNCTIONAL MISALIGNMENT

The social studies methods course is perhaps the closest thing to a common experience that social studies teachers have, with survey or introductory courses in history and the social sciences running a close second. Given the nature of many social studies undergraduate programs the methods course is the social studies educator's best, and often his only, formal opportunity to influence the teaching of social studies. The burden of the course is indeed heavy.

When one travels to the schools he encounters mixed feelings on the part of experienced teachers regarding their methods experience. Typical comments are:

> "The professor meant well, but he didn't know what it was like out here in schools like this one. I would like to see him do all that stuff in this place."
>
> "The guy always talked about how great inquiry was, but he never once demonstrated it."
>
> "The course was too theoretical, I never did see what it had to do with the subjects I teach."
>
> "The course was interesting, but all that unit planning was a waste of time, I haven't done one of those since I graduated."
>
> "I'm sold on inquiry, but it just won't work with no library and kids like these."

While these are admittedly hypothetical comments, they do reflect the feelings of hundreds of teachers encountered by this writer during the past six years. It seems that many practicing social studies teachers have little respect for the methods course.

What typically goes on in the hundreds of social studies methods courses taught each year? To answer such a question with any certainty would require extensive classroom visitations and/or reports by methods instructors concerning the content and strategies used in the course. In the absence of such data one can only infer the nature of the course from the commonly used student materials. Obviously such inferencing assumes that the content of social studies methods texts reflects the discussions and assignments of many methods courses.

In terms of the focus of this paper one of the distinguishing characteristics of most social studies methods texts is their assumption that most teachers will operate as their own curriculum developer and packager. In text after text, one finds substantial amounts of space devoted to the process of daily lesson plans and resource unit construction.[1] Specimen units and lesson plans are typically included and end of chapter notes suggest that students prepare their own such plans. This writer's discussions with both teachers and methods instructors indicate that such assignments are common practice.

The type of planning advocated in these texts consists of the teacher drawing upon many sources for lesson materials, e.g., readings from the popular and scholarly journals, films, recordings, and filmstrips. This is especially true of resource units, which provide many more materials and activities than could be employed by any one teacher. Not uncommonly the methods texts list sources of free materials, catalogues which the teacher should consult, and other sources from which the teacher can select the numerous components of the unit plan. The sample lesson plans and resource units displayed in the texts obviously require substantial amounts of preparation time. Thus, if it is

valid to assume that this activity is common to many methods courses it follows that prospective teachers invest much effort in producing their own versions of such units and plans.

What are the implications of having thousands of prospective social studies teachers plan comprehensive and detailed lesson plans and resource units? Again, one can only speculate. One result, perhaps unintended by methods instructors, may be that the new teacher concludes that it is somehow unprofessional or a sign of intellectual impotence to choose a prepackaged product, like some of those being developed by the social studies curriculum projects. Such an unwillingness to borrow what others have developed is one of the major impediments to educational change. There is no evidence that the social studies methods course introduces this professional myth, but it would seem logical that it helps perpetuate it. Whether one views that as desirable or debilitating depends upon one's views about the proper role of the teacher.

As stated earlier, the preparation of lesson plans and resource units requires considerable time. It is certainly reasonable to assume that if during the course much time is devoted to planning exercises, less can be spent teaching students how to select from and adapt existing packages of curriculum materials. These latter activities are also time consuming and while it is possible for a course to deal both with planning and selecting-adapting skills, it is perhaps unlikely given the time constraints.

Professor Jan Tucker has gathered data concerning the attitudes of methods instructors toward the curriculum development projects. This writer has not seen that data and, thus, can only speculate about its nature. Certainly if the

notion that the teacher should act as his own developer and packager is common to widely used methods textbooks, it may also follow that the instructors who select those books share such views. If that is the case it is quite likely that such instructors would see prepackaged materials as a threat to the proper role of the teacher, and indirectly to their own function of teaching teachers to be their own developers. It would indeed be difficult for such instructors not to feel it necessary to "put down" project materials. In short, the greater the imagined role threat of the projects and their materials the stronger the instructor's need to defend the teacher-as-developer notion by discrediting project materials. Such motives would be consistent with the charge, often voiced at professional meetings of social studies educators, that a fully developed package of materials places the teacher in the role of a technician rather than of a scholar assembling his own course.

The view that the teacher must somehow piece together his own course is in sharp contrast to the role of the classroom teacher held, implicitly or explicitly, by those in the curriculum projects. Most of the social studies projects have or are producing highly integrated course packages. For example, instead of referring the teacher to a list of twenty films, from which he is invited to select one, the project package includes media designed specifically for the course, often in such a way that the printed materials alone are not a sufficient basis for instruction. Such packages usually include specific instructions to the teacher concerning the way(s) which the materials were intended to be used. Put another way, most of the project packages are complete; able to stand alone without the assistance of supplemental materials. This is not to say that the teacher may not supplement or adapt such materials, only

that it is not necessary. Judging from the products of the curriculum development projects, it would seem that the people responsible for them assumed that the classroom teacher wanted all the help he could get in the areas of development and packaging of course materials.

The people in Project Africa mention a second justification for the development of complete curriculum packages. It was their feeling that special training for teachers using their materials would be useful. It had also been their expericnec that most teachers were not equipped with even minimal development skills.

> Many teachers, for example, fail to conceptualize what they do in the classroom. They tend to be content-oriented, <u>covering</u> a succession of chapters in a text or topics in a syllabus. In addition, most teachers seem to be "carrier-outers" who need, and indeed seek, considerable direction ....good classroom teachers -- those who can take a piece of material and make it come alive for students -- may in most instances, never be able to create that same piece of material.[2]

In other words, those in Project Africa saw teachers as needing special training in how to develop and use inquiry type materials. Given this dilemma, they opted for development since, "...prospects of teachers receiving training were much better than the prospects of their developing such programs..."[3] One must then ask whether such special training is essential for successful use of the materials?

In numerous conversations with project directors this writer found most had concluded that if the adoption of their products depended upon the teacher receiving special training the probability of widespread adoption was small. Armed with this assumption the projects moved in the direction of self-contained

packages which could be employed with success by the typical teacher without additional training. Since many of their materials were quite different from the textbook to which the teacher was accustomed the developers provided detailed instructions on how to utilize them. For example, the staff of the Anthropology Curriculum Study Project found it, "...most desirable not only to offer the clearest possible teaching suggestions but also to make it abundantly clear all that we feel should not be done on a particular day..."[4]

Though there are few formal reports of success, those which are available appear to indicate that the developers were able to successfully operationalize their desire to make the materials self-sufficient. The High School Curriculum Center in Government at Indiana University reported that:

> Performance on the Political Knowledge Test of experimental group students of 'unprepared' teachers is not significantly different from the test performance of experimental group students of 'prepared' teachers.[5]

The Directors of Project Africa, stated in their Final Report that:

> Disregarding the question of whether teachers without special preparation can achieve the stated objectives of the program and looking only at whether these teachers found the inquiry strategy and the materials useable, the answer, based upon the teachers' evaluations, is a qualified yes.
>
> Most of the teachers had very definite problems, initially, in adjusting to the style of teaching demanded by the inquiry strategy. However, nearly all of them were able to adjust and, by the completion of the program, felt quite comfortable.[6]

Other project directors informally reported similar findings. During the summer of 1970 Indiana University held a two week National Science Foundation sponsored institute designed to familarize forty principals and supervisors with the materials of five of the social studies curriculum projects. When asked by representatives of those projects about the usefulness of highly specific

teaching plans the participants reported almost unanamously that their teachers found such detailed plans to be essential in teaching the materials. It appears that teachers generally are neither hampered nor insulted by what some have termed 'teacher proof' materials, i.e., prepackaged materials acccmpanied by specific instructions on how to use them.

As part of their assistance to the adopter some of the social studies projects have produced teacher kits of one kind or another. The Greater Cleveland Social Science Program In-service Education Kit includes a teacher's manual, administrator's manual, and a series of audio-tapes, all designed to help teachers understand the basic prinicples of history and the social sciences. The High School Geography Project has produced three teacher kits which employ student materials from the project to introduce teachers to the uses of simulation, media, and evaluation. Science Research Associates' Social Science Laboratory Units, social psychology materials for grades 4-6, includes The Teacher's Role in Social Science Investigation, a book designed to help teachers understand how social scientists go about their work. The Behaviorial Approach to the Study of Politics: An Overview, by Leroy Rieselbach was developed to serve a similar function for the course, American Political Behavior. Fred Newmann's Clarifying Public Controversy: An Approach to Social Studies, while not a project developed book, draws heavily from the materials developed by the Harvard Social Studies Project and is designed to serve a function similar to its project counterparts. The American Political Science Association's Political Science Education Project is also currently developing in-service materials to inform potential adoptors about civics materials.

The social studies projects have also produced numerous films intended to assist the adopter by showing him some of the skills required to teach the new materials. The Anthropology Curriculum Study Project, Sociological Resources for Secondary Schools, The High School Curriculum Center in Government, the Harvard Social Studies Project, and the Carnagie-Mellon Social Studies Project are among those which have brought out such films. Again, project directors report heavy use of such in-service devices.

To date, no project has produced materials for the social studies methods course, though one project director has written a textbook which draws heavily upon project materials for illustrative purposes.[7] This being the case one can only speculate about the type of methods course and materials the project people would prefer. Given the assumptions which the projects appear to have made regarding the role of the teacher, in terms of instructional decision-making, it seems safe to speculate that project people would spend little time teaching the teacher to be his own developer. Instead, much more time might be spent teaching students how to select and adapt prepackaged materials and giving them opportunities to practice the teaching skills necessary to use the new materials successfully. Certainly if the in-service kits are any indication of what project people might opt for, their methods courses would include substantial use of student materials as the basis for discussions of topics such as classroom questioning, the structure of the disciplines, sequencing of concepts, value clarification, evaluation, etc.

While methods instructors teach and project people develop, thousands of teachers labor on in the social studies classes out in the "real world". If

the many teachers visited by this writer are at all typical, such teachers work surrounded by numerous constraints. Many have little, if any, planning time during the school day and must make do with only the most meager amounts of supplemental materials. Few, if any, have any type of clerical or research assistant help, not to mention a library stocked with primary source material. They typically give grades to 125 or more students to whom they not uncommonly teach three or four different subjects. From the projects' point of view, an appalling number have no notion of the substance or thrust of the behavorial sciences, in many cases because it has been years since the teacher last enrolled in a social science course. This intellectual isolation is preserved by the professional myth that teachers should not blow their own horns, a belief which works to keep teachers in schools that are ten miles apart from learning from each other's experiences.

If this accurately describes the world of the teacher, what types of assistance do they seek? Again this writer must depend upon conversations with experienced social studies teachers, mostly in Indiana, for data to answer such a question. That sample of teachers would like practical rather than theoretical advice, information about anything that will assist them in preparing for their daily lessons, and models of what is being advocated as good practice with examples drawn from history and the social sciences.

These same teachers seem willing to change if they can be made aware of new materials and practices, see them convincingly demonstrated with <u>their</u> students in <u>their</u> schools by people they respect and trust, see the relative advantage of the innovation, and receive assistance in adapting and trying the innovation on a

small scale. In short, social studies teachers are like most potential adopters. He who blames the lack of change on the stupidity of teachers merely confirms his own ignorance, in addition to being wrong.

If this apparent misalignment between the methods courses and the projects continues it is quite possible that both will be losers. The projects will lose because the adoption of their products will be slowed by the perpetuation of the myth that it is unprofessional to borrow and that the only worthy curriculum is one developed locally. The methods courses, and their instructors will lose as they slip even lower in the estimation of teachers who will see them as increasingly irrelevant and lacking in social science examples.

The important question seems to be, "Can the projects and methods courses assist one another, and if so, how?" In this writer's opinion, the answer is yes. The projects can and should expand their development of both pre-service and in-service materials. Such packages have the advantage of tying abstractions directly to student materials, a long standing deficiency (according to teachers) of the methods course. They also provide the student with at least a passing acquaintance with project materials. Perhaps the projects should also design a kit which would assist local committees to adapt and evaluate trials of the new materials.[8]

Methods courses can also be altered. While it is probably not necessary, or likely, that methods texts give up completely the image of the teacher as his own local developer, they can and should pay much more attention to the processes of adaptation, selection and trial. They also should include many more examples of project materials and implications that it is unprofessional to borrow should be eliminated.

Methods instructors should (many in fact already are) make use of project materials in place of, or in addition to, the text. They should also reconsider the practicality of making the production of lesson and unit plans a (the) major assignment of the course. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, they should cease trying to cast social studies teachers in the "junior scholar" image.

In summary, the major thesis of this paper is that there is a growing misalignment between social studies methods courses and the social studies development projects. This misalignment results primarily from a difference between the two groups regarding the proper role of the teacher. If the misalignment is allowed to persist it will be disfunctional in the very area which both methods courses and projects have as a common concern, namely improving the teaching of social studies in the schools.

NOTES

1. Among some notable exceptions are Edwin Fenton, Teaching The New Social Studies in Secondary Schools: An Inductive Approach (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1966); Maurice P. Hunt and Lawrence E. Metcalf, Teaching High School Social Studies: Problems in Reflective Thinking and Social Understanding (Harper and Row, 1968); and Byron Massialas and C. Benjamin Cox, Inquiry in Social Studies (McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966). However, the Hunt and Metcalf and the Massialas and Cox texts assume that the teacher will locate and organize his own materials.

2. Barry K. Beyer and E. Perry Hicks, Project Africa: Final Report, Project 7-0 724, Contract OEC-3-7-070724-2970, Carnegie-Mellon University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, June, 1970, p. 95.

3. Ibid, p. 11.

4. Anthropology Curriculum Study Project, Day One: Anthropology Materials in Social Studies Courses; A Case Study, The Project, Chicago, Illinois 1967, p. 60.

5. John J. Patrick, "The Impact of an Experimental Course, 'American Political Behavior,' on the Knowledge of Secondary School Students," paper delivered at

the Sixty-sixth Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, September, 1970. Available from the High School Curriculum Center in Government, Indiana University, 1129 Atwater Street, Bloomington, Indiana 47401, p. 19.

6. Beyer and Hicks, op. cit. p. 72.

7. Fenton, op. cit.

8. The Curriculum Materials Analysis System developed by Irving Morrissett and W.W. Stevens is already proving useful in assisting local adopters with the selection process.